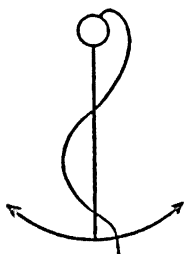


# THE CELESTIAL COUNTRY ☿ ☿ ☿

FROM THE RHYTHM OF  
ST. BERNARD OF CLUNY  
TRANSLATED BY THE REV.  
JOHN MASON NEALE D.D.



PORTLAND MAINE  
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# PREFACE

*"O frate mio ! ciascuna è cittadina  
D'una vera cillà —."*

DANTE

There is a city, builded by no hand,  
And unapproachable by sea or shore;  
And unassailable by any band  
Of storming soldiery for evermore.

T. W. PARSONS



## PREFACE

“**T**HIS magnificent poem, evidently inspired by the last two chapters of the Revelation of Saint John,” says John Julian<sup>1</sup>, “was composed in the Abbey of Cluny, about 1145.” The original was dedicated to Peter the Venerable, the General of the order to which St. Bernard, the author, belonged.

The design and execution of this work, the Latin Christians’ great hymn, may best

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<sup>1</sup>. *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, by John Julian, D. D., 1907 ed.

be set forth in the words of John Mason Neale, the translator, whose version is reprinted in this book and whose name is so forever joined for us with that of the Medieval French monk, Bernard of Cluny, because the well-loved hymn *Jerusalem, the Golden* was taken from this poem. Dr. Neale translates Bernard's aim thus:<sup>2</sup> "The subject of the author is the Advent of Christ to Judgment: the joys of the Saints, the pains of the reprobate. His *intention*, to persuade to the contempt of the world. The *use*, to despise the things of the world: to seek the things that be God's."

The entire poem of three thousand lines, which Bernard called *De Contemptu Mundi*, is "for the most part a very bitter satire against the moral disorder of the monastic poet's time. He spares no one: priests, nuns, bishops, monks, and even Rome itself, are mercilessly scourged. . . Bernard of Cluny

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<sup>2</sup>. *The Rhythm of Bernard de Morlaix*, by John Mason Neale, D. D., 1858.

is indeed a lyrical writer, swept from one theme to another by the intense force of ascetic meditation and by the majestic power of his own verse, in which there lingers yet a certain fierce intoxication of poetic wrath. His highly wrought pictures of heaven and hell were probably known to Dante."<sup>3</sup>

Like the details of other writers' lives in earlier ages, Bernard's exact background is vague. Some hold that he was of English birth, and others that he was of a distinguished French family. Nevertheless, he was certainly a monk at Cluny in the time of Peter the Venerable (1122-1156). But the mere particulars of his life would be of little significance beside the burning power of his passionate voice still ringing in the hearts of men and women who remember his song. So we find significant the following words in his dedication to the poem, for the monk believed that the poem, written

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3. St. Bernard of Cluny, in *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

in a "rhythm of intense difficulty," was attained through special divine grace and inspiration:<sup>4</sup> "Often and of long time I had heard the Bridegroom, but had not listened to Him, saying—'Thy voice is pleasant in Mine ears.' And again the Beloved cried out, 'Open to Me, My sister.' What then? I arose, that I might open to my Beloved. And I said, 'Lord, to the end that my heart may think, that my pen may write, and that my mouth may set forth Thy praise, pour both into my heart and pen and mouth Thy grace.' And the Lord said, 'Open thy mouth.' Which He straightway filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding. . . And I say it in no wise arrogantly, but with all humility, and therefore boldly: that unless that spirit of Wisdom and Understanding had been with me, and flowed in upon so difficult a metre, I could not have composed so long a work."

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4. From Dr. Neale's translation noted under 2.



Across the years since the Twelfth Century time seems to vanish utterly in the words of the poem itself, concerning which, besides pointing out certain limitations in the numerous editions, Archbishop Trench also adds:<sup>5</sup> "In these lines (*Urbs Syon aurea*) the reader will recognise the original of that lovely hymn, which within the last few years has been added to those already possessed by the Church. A new hymn which has won such a place in the affections of Christian people as has 'Jerusalem, the golden' is so priceless an acquisition that I must needs rejoice to have been the first to recall from oblivion the poem which yielded it."

If Archbishop Trench was glad to claim recognition for his part in saving the entire original poem, John Mason Neale must truly have been happy to have created the version of that famous hymn, first printed

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5. *Sacred Latin Poetry*, by Archbishop Trench, ed. 1874, p. 314.

in his *Medieval Hymns and Sequences* of 1851, for in his preface to the second edition of that collection Dr. Neale bears this testimony: "It would be most unthankful did I not express my gratitude to God for the favor He has given some of the centos made from the poem, but especially *Jerusalem, the Golden*. It has found a place in some twenty hymnals; and for the last two years it has hardly been possible to read any newspaper, which gives prominence to ecclesiastical news, without seeing its employment chronicled at some dedication or other festival. It is also a great favorite with the dissenters, and has obtained admission to the Roman Catholic services. 'And I say this,' to quote Bernard's own preface, 'in no wise arrogantly, but with all humility, and therefore boldly.'" It is not surprising that the translator enjoyed satisfying happiness in the certainty that men and women of all ranks and conditions continued to cherish that lovely hymn which still carries comfort and

consolation to desolate earts in many a lonely struggle. For in plain words, clear to every man and woman, his version gives voice to the divine unrest in the heart of man. It is the same longing which stirred St. John to his *Revelation*, Plato to his *Republic*, St. Augustine to his *City of God*, Sir Thomas More to the *Utopia*, Francis Bacon to the *New Atlantis*, and every seeker of the celestial country. Who is there in whose memory this image of the mystical city is not imprinted:

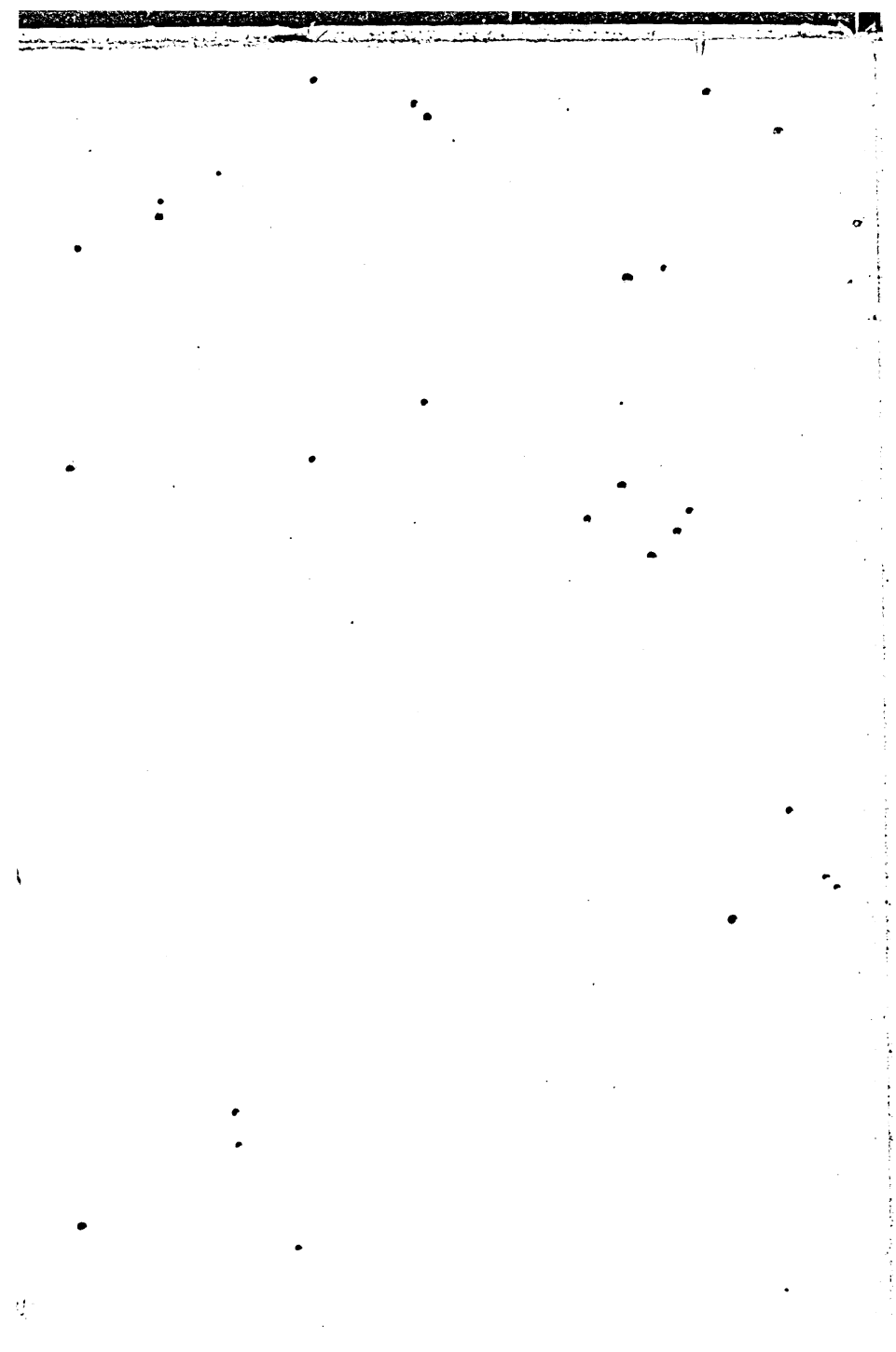
“They stand, those halls of Sion,  
    Conjubilant with song,  
And bright with many an angel,  
    And all the martyr throng:  
The Prince is ever in them;  
    The daylight is serene;  
The pastures of the Blessed  
    Are deck'd in glorious sheen.  
There is the Throne of David,—  
    And there, from care released,  
The song of them that triumph,  
    The shout of them that feast;

And they who, with their Leader,  
Have conquer'd in the fight,  
For ever and for ever  
Are clad in robes of white!"

Of the entire poem from which those well-remembered lines are now so universally loved and sung by English-speaking peoples, Dr. Neale makes this significant estimate: "I have no hesitation in saying that I look on these verses of Bernard as the most lovely, in the same way that the *Dies Irae* is the most sublime, and the *Stabat Mater* the most pathetic of medieval poems."



# THE CELESTIAL COUNTRY





## THE CELESTIAL COUNTRY.

**T**HE world is very evil;  
The times are waxing late:  
Be sober and keep vigil;  
The Judge is at the gate:  
The Judge that comes in mercy,  
The Judge that comes with might  
To terminate the evil,  
To diadem the right.  
When the just and gentle Monarch  
Shall summon from the tomb,  
Let man, the guilty, tremble,  
For Man, the God, shall doom.

Arise, arise, good Christian!

Let right to wrong succeed;

Let penitential sorrow

To heavenly gladness lead;

To the light that hath no evening,

That knows nor moon nor sun,

The light so new and golden,

The light that is but one.

And when the Sole-Begotten

Shall render up once more

The kingdom to the Father

Whose own it was before,—

Then glory yet unheard of

Shall shed abroad its ray,

Resolving all enigmas,

An endless Sabbath-day.

Then, then from his oppressors

The Hebrew shall go free,

And celebrate in triumph

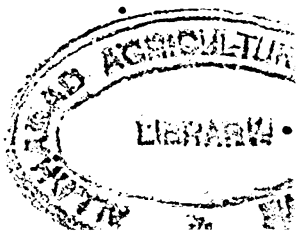
The year of Jubilee;



And the sunlit land that recks not  
Of tempest nor of fight,  
Shall fold within its bosom  
Each happy Israelite:  
The home of fadeless splendor,  
Of flowers that fear no thorn,  
Where they shall dwell as children,  
Who here as exiles mourn.  
Midst power that knows no limit,  
And wisdom free from bound,  
The Beatific vision  
Shall glad the saints around:  
The peace of all the faithful,  
The calm of all the blest,  
Inviolatè, unvaried,  
Divinest, sweetest, best.  
Yes, peace! for war is needless,—  
Yes, calm! for storm is past,—  
And goal from finish'd labor,  
And anchorage at last.

That peace—but who may claim it?  
The guileless in their way,  
Who keep the ranks of battle,  
Who mean the thing they say:  
The peace that is for heaven,  
And shall be for the earth:  
The palace that re-echoes  
With festal song and mirth;  
The garden, breathing spices,  
The paradise on high;  
Grace beautified to glory,  
Unceasing minstrelsy.  
There nothing can be feeble,  
There none can ever mourn,  
There nothing is divided,  
There nothing can be torn:  
'Tis fury, ill, and scandal,  
'Tis peaceless peace below;  
Peace, endless, strifeless, ageless,  
The halls of Sion know.

O happy, holy portion,  
• Refection for the blest;  
True vision of true beauty,  
Sweet cure of all distress!  
Strive, man, to win that glory;  
Toil, man, to gain that light;  
Send hope before to grasp it,  
• Till hope be lost in sight:  
• Till Jesus gives the portion  
Those blessed souls to fill,  
The insatiate, yet satisfied,  
The full, yet craving still.  
That fulness and that craving  
Alike are free from pain,  
Where thou, midst heavenly citizens,  
A home like theirs shalt gain.  
Here is the warlike trumpet;  
• There, life set free from sin;  
When to the last Great Supper  
The faithful shall come in;



When the heavenly net is laden  
With fishes many and great;  
So glorious in its fulness,  
Yet so inviolate:  
And the perfect from the shatter'd,  
And the fall'n from them that stand,  
And the sheep-flock from the goat-herd  
Shall part on either hand!  
And these shall pass to torment,  
And those shall triumph, then;  
The new peculiar nation,  
Blest number of blest men.  
Jerusalem demands them:  
They paid the price on earth,  
And now shall reap the harvest  
In blissfulness and mirth:  
The glorious holy people,  
Who evermore relied  
Upon their Chief and Father,  
The King, the Crucified:

The sacred ransom'd number  
Now bright with endless sheen,  
Who made the Cross their watchword  
Of Jesus Nazarene:  
Who, fed with heavenly nectar,  
Where soul-like odors play,  
Draw out the endless leisure  
Of that long vernal day:  
And through the sacred lilies,  
And flowers on every side,  
The happy dear-bought people  
Go wandering far and wide.  
Their breasts are filled with gladness,  
Their mouths are tuned to praise,  
What time, now safe for ever,  
On former sins they gaze:  
The fouler was the error,  
The sadder was the fall,  
The ampler are the praises  
Of Him who pardon'd all.

Their one and only anthem,  
The fulness of His love,  
Who gives instead of torment  
Eternal joys above;  
Instead of torment, glory;  
Instead of death, that life  
Wherewith your happy country,  
True Israelites, is rife.

Brief life is here our portion,  
Brief sorrow, short-lived care,  
The life that knows no ending,  
The tearless life, is there.  
O happy retribution!  
Short toil, eternal rest,  
For mortals and for sinners  
A mansion with the blest!  
That we should look, poor wand'ers,  
To have our home on high!

That worms should seek for dwellings  
Beyond the starry sky!  
To all one happy guerdon  
Of one celestial grace;  
For all, for all, who mourn their fall,  
Is one eternal place;  
And martyrdom hath roses  
Upon that heavenly ground,  
And white and virgin lilies  
For virgin-souls abound.  
There grief is turn'd to pleasure,  
Such pleasure as below  
No human voice can utter,  
No human heart can know;  
And after fleshly scandal,  
And after this world's night,  
And after storm and whirlwind,  
Is calm, and joy, and light.  
And now we fight the battle,  
But then shall wear the crown

Of full and everlasting  
And passionless renown;  
And now we watch and struggle,  
And now we live in hope,  
And Sion, in her anguish,  
With Babylon must cope;  
But He whom now we trust in  
Shall then be seen and known,  
And they that know and see Him  
Shall have Him for their own.  
The miserable pleasures  
Of the body shall decay;  
The bland and flattering struggles  
Of the flesh shall pass away,  
And none shall there be jealous,  
And none shall there contend;  
Fraud, clamor, guile—what say I?  
All ill, all ill shall end!  
And there is David's Fountain,  
And life in fullest glow,



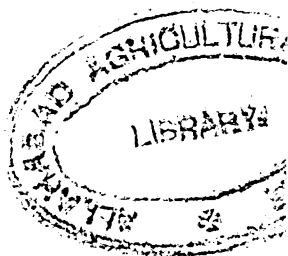
And there the light is golden,  
And milk and honey flow;  
The light that hath no evening,  
The health that hath no sore,  
The life that hath no ending,  
But lasteth evermore.

There Jesus shall embrace us,  
There Jesus be embraced,—  
That spirit's food and sunshine  
Whence earthly love is chased.  
Amidst the happy chorus,  
A place, however low,  
Shall show Him us, and showing,  
Shall satiate evermo.  
By hope we struggle onward,  
While here we must be fed  
By milk, as tender infants,  
But there by Living Bread.

The night was full of terror,  
The morn is bright with gladness:  
The Cross becomes our harbor,  
And we triumph after sadness,  
And Jesus to His true ones  
Brings trophies fair to see,  
And Jesus shall be loved, and  
Beheld in Galilee;  
Beheld, when morn shall waken,  
And shadows shall decay,  
And each true-hearted servant  
Shall shine as doth the day;  
And every ear shall hear it,—  
Behold thy King's array,  
Behold thy God in beauty,  
The Law hath past away!  
Yes! God my King and Portion,  
In fulness of His grace,  
We then shall see for ever,  
And worship face to face.

Then Jacob into Israel,  
From earthlier self estranged,  
And Leah into Rachel,  
For ever shall be changed:  
Then all the halls of Sion  
For aye shall be complete,  
And, in the Land of Beauty,  
All things of beauty meet.

For thee, oh dear dear Country!  
Mine eyes their vigils keep;  
For very love, beholding  
Thy happy name, they weep:  
The mention of thy glory  
Is unction to the breast,  
And medicine in sickness,  
And love, and life, and rest.  
O one, O onely Mansion!  
O Paradise of Joy!



Where tears are ever banish'd,  
And smiles have no alloy;  
Beside thy living waters  
All plants are, great and small,  
The cedar of the forest,  
The hyssop of the wall:  
With jaspers glow thy bulwarks;  
Thy streets with emeralds blaze;  
The sardius and the topaz  
Unite in thee their rays:  
Thine ageless walls are bonded  
With amethyst unpriced:  
Thy Saints build up its fabric,  
And the corner-stone is Christ.  
The Cross is all thy splendor,  
The Crucified thy praise:  
His laud and benediction  
Thy ransom'd people raise:  
Jesus, the Gem of Beauty,  
True God and Man, they sing:

The never-failing Garden,  
The ever-golden Ring:  
The Door, the Pledge, the Husband,  
The Guardian of his Court:  
The Day-star of Salvation,  
The Porter and the Port.  
Thou hast no shore, fair ocean!  
Thou hast no time, bright day!  
Dear fountain of refreshment  
To pilgrims far away!  
Upon the Rock of Ages  
They raise thy holy tower:  
Thine is the victor's laurel,  
And thine the golden dower:  
Thou feel'st in mystic rapture,  
O Bride that know'st no guile,  
The Prince's sweetest kisses,  
The Prince's loveliest smile;  
Unfading lilies, bracelets  
Of living pearl thine own;

The Lamb is ever near thee,  
The Bridegroom thine alone;  
The Crown is He to guerdon,  
The Buckler to protect,  
And He Himself the Mansion;  
And He the Architect.  
The only art thou needest,  
Thanksgiving for thy lot:  
The only joy thou seekest,  
The Life where Death is not:  
And all thine endless leisure  
In sweetest accents sings,  
The ill that was thy merit,—  
The wealth that is thy King's!

Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest,  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppress'd:

I know not, oh I know not,  
What social joys are there;  
What radiancy of glory,  
What light beyond compare!

And when I fain would sing them,  
My spirit fails and faints;  
And vainly would it image  
The assembly of the Saints.

They stand, those halls of Sion,  
Conjubilant with song,  
And bright with many an angel,  
And all the martyr throng:  
The Prince is ever in them;  
The daylight is serene;  
The pastures of the Blessed  
Are deck'd in glorious sheen.

There is the Throne of David,—  
And there, from care released,  
The song of them that triumph,  
The shout of them that feast;  
And they who, with their Leader,  
Have conquer'd in the fight,  
For ever and for ever  
Are clad in robes of white!

O holy, placid harp-notes  
Of that eternal hymn!  
O sacred, sweet refection,  
And peace of Seraphim!  
O thirst for ever ardent,  
Yet evermore content!  
O true peculiar vision  
Of God cunctipotent!  
Ye know the many mansions  
For many a glorious name,



And divers retributions  
That divers merits claim:  
For midst the constellations  
That deck our earthly sky,  
This star than that is brighter,—  
And so it is on high.

Jerusalem the glorious!  
The glory of the Elect!  
O dear and future vision  
That eager hearts expect:  
Even now by faith I see thee:  
Even here thy walls discern:  
To thee my thoughts are kindled,  
And strive and pant and yearn:  
Jerusalem the onely,  
That look'st from heaven below,  
In thee is all my glory;  
In me is all my woe:

And though my body may not,  
My spirit seeks thee fain,  
Till flesh and earth return me  
To earth and flesh again.  
Oh none can tell thy bulwarks,  
How gloriously they rise:  
Oh none can tell thy capitals  
Of beautiful device:  
Thy loveliness oppresses  
All human thought and heart:  
And none, O Peace, O Sion,  
Can sing thee as thou art.  
New mansion of new people,  
Whom God's own love and light  
Promote, increase, make holy,  
Identify, unite.  
Thou City of the Angels!  
Thou City of the Lord!  
Whose everlasting music  
Is the glorious decachord!

And there the band of Prophets  
    United praise ascribes,  
And there the twelvefold chorus  
    Of Israel's ransom'd tribes:  
The lily-beds of virgins,  
    The roses' martyr-glow,  
The cohort of the Fathers  
• Who kept the faith below.  
And there the Sole-Begotten  
    Is Lord in regal state;  
He, Judah's mystic Lion,  
    He, Lamb Immaculate.  
O fields that know no sorrow!  
    O state that fears no strife!  
O princely bow'rs! O land of flow'rs!  
    O realm and home of life!

Jerusalem, exulting  
    On that securest shore,

I hope thee, wish thee, sing thee,  
And love thee evermore!  
I ask not for my merit:  
I seek not to deny  
My merit is destruction,  
A child of wrath am I:  
But yet with Faith I venture  
And Hope upon my way;  
For those perennial guerdons  
I labor night and day.  
The best and dearest Father  
Who made me, and who saved,  
Bore with me in defilement,  
And from defilement laved;  
When in His strength I struggle,  
For very joy I leap,  
When in my sin I totter,  
I weep, or try to weep;  
And grace, sweet grace celestial,  
Shall all its love display,

And David's royal Fountain  
Purge every sin away.

O mine, my golden Sion!  
O lovelier far than gold!  
With laurel-girt battalions,  
And safe victorious fold;  
O sweet and blessed country,  
Shall I ever see thy face?  
O sweet and blessed country,  
Shall I ever win thy grace?  
I have the hope within me  
To comfort and to bless!  
Shall I ever win the prize itself?  
Oh, tell me, tell me, Yes!

Exult, O dust and ashes!  
The Lord shall be thy part;

His only, His for ever,  
Thou shalt be, and thou art!  
Exult, O dust and ashes!  
The Lord shall be thy part;  
His only, His for ever,  
Thou shalt be, and thou art!



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